



Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas

DAN MORALES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

March 30, 1998

Ms. Carla Robinson
Assistant City Attorney
City of College Station
P.O. Box 9960
College Station, Texas 77842

OR98-0822

Dear Ms. Robinson:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Texas Open Records Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 114260.

The City of College Station (the "city") received a request for the medical and employment records of a city employee. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted documents contain medical records governed by another statute. The Medical Practice Act (the "MPA"), article 4495b of Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes, protects from disclosure "[r]ecords of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that are created or maintained by a physician." V.T.C.S. art. 4495b, § 5.08(b). Access to medical records is governed by provisions outside the Open Records Act. Open Records Decision No. 598 (1991). The MPA provides for both confidentiality of medical records and certain statutory access requirements. *Id.* at 2. The medical records submitted to this office for review may only be released as provided by the MPA.

Section 552.103(a) excepts from disclosure information:

(1) relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature or settlement negotiations, to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party; and

(2) that the attorney general or the attorney of the political subdivision has determined should be withheld from public inspection.

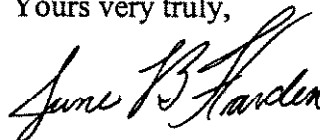
The city has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.--Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 (1990) at 4. The city must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under 552.103(a).

In this instance, you state that the city has received a notice of claim from a current employee for lost wages and benefits. You also state, for the purposes of the Open Records Act, that the claim letter complies with the notice requirement of the Texas Tort Claims Act. We conclude that litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision No. 638 (1996). We also conclude that the documents submitted by the city are related to the litigation for the purposes of section 552.103(a). The documents may, therefore, be withheld pursuant to section 552.103.

It appears that some of the requested information has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the litigation. Once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information, and it must be disclosed. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Furthermore, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and should not be relied on as a previous determination regarding any other records. If you have any questions regarding this ruling, please contact our office.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "June B. Harden".

June B. Harden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JBH/gle

Ref.: ID# 114260

Enclosures: Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Shannon Crowe
Attorney at Law
102 E. 26th Street
Bryan, Texas 77803
(w/o enclosures)